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TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1](#). Mideast
- [2](#). NPT Review Conference May 2-27 New York
- [3](#). May 5 UK Elections

Key stories in the media:

Israel Radio reported that the PA has informed the Israeli defense establishment that PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas has instructed his forces to collect weapons held by militants in Tulkarm and Jericho. The station cited the defense establishment's uncertainty about whether this is actually being done, but that it is a positive step. Speaking on Israel Radio this morning, IDF Intelligence chief Aharon Zeevi-Farkash was quoted as saying that weapons had been gathered in Jericho, and that the process was going on in Tulkarm. The media had quoted Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz as saying Wednesday that he is freezing the handover of West Bank towns to Palestinian security control because the Palestinians have failed to honor their promise to disarm militants. Yediot led with the assessment of the defense establishment that despite prospects of calm after the disengagement, Qassam rockets will continue to be launched, threatening 44 additional Negev communities. Yediot cited the IDF's belief that Hamas will win in the July parliamentary elections in the PA. Zeevi-Farkash told Israel Radio this morning that Abbas will not directly clash with Hamas at this time. Maariv reported that the Tanzim leader in Jenin, Zacharia Zubeidi, is now a member of the Palestinian security organizations, and is responsible for preventing terror attacks.

All media (banner in Jerusalem Post) reported that the Israel Police has mapped out all the homes in settlements in the Gaza Strip and northern West Bank slated for evacuation under the disengagement plan, collecting intelligence on the settlers and the various levels of threats they pose to evacuating forces. Hatzofe quoted a GOI official as saying that the Disengagement Administration has in effect been "neutralized" and that Ilan Cohen, the D-G of the Prime Minister's Office, is now in charge of the implementation of disengagement. Ha'aretz quoted chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat as saying that the PA's official position is that Israel demolish settlement housing in Gaza and clear away the debris.

All media reported that in an 8-2 vote, the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee demanded on Wednesday that the GOI not sign any agreement with Egypt on the deployment of Egyptian forces in the eastern part of the Sinai peninsula until the matter is brought to the Knesset for approval.

All media (lead story in Ha'aretz) reported that Pentagon analyst Larry Franklin was formally charged Wednesday with passing classified information about Iraq to two individuals believed to be Steven Rosen and Keith Weissman, former officials of the pro-Israel lobby AIPAC. Yediot quoted FM Silvan Shalom as saying: "Israel has strategic, intimate relations with the U.S., which include exchanges of classified information. Israel will not do anything that would harm those relations. Those who raise the possibility of our intervention in this affair are wrong." Yediot also cited an unofficial response from AIPAC denying any connection to the affair.

Jerusalem Post cited a Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA) report as saying that Israel received much higher marks in the 2004 State Department's human rights country report, published in February, than it did in 2003 -- not because of any significant changes in the ground but apparently a shift in how the Bush administration views the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. JTA says that the U.S. appears more willing to accept long-standing Israeli claims that the blurred distinction between Palestinian combatants and civilians often makes it hard to assign blame in incidents that end with Palestinian deaths. JTA notes that the State Department replaced the traditional "holding sentence" -- the department's term for the sentence that reflects its overall assessment of a country's human rights record -- with a milder one.

Yediot reported that the Shin Bet has recently been successful in uncovering subversive efforts by right-wing Israelis.

All media reported that two 15-year-old Palestinian boys who demonstrated against the construction of the security fence near Beit Liqya in the West Bank were killed by IDF fire Wednesday. IDF Radio reported that the commander of the unit involved has been suspended from operational duties

Leading media reported that "amid fears of a Hamas landslide victory" (according to Jerusalem Post), the Palestinians will vote today in the second phase of the municipal elections.

Leading media reported that outgoing Shin Bet chief Avi Dichter told the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee Wednesday that had the security fence been built earlier, the number of terror victims would have been smaller.

Yediot reported that Israel has demanded that Japan lift the embargo that it has imposed on the Center for Nuclear Research in Nahal Sorek.

All media continued to highlight events related to Holocaust Memorial Day. Maariv banners: "60 Years of Memory." The media quoted PM Sharon as saying Wednesday: "We have learned the lessons of the Holocaust. We will never, never again be caught unprepared."

Maariv published the results of the first in a series of bi-weekly polls conducted in conjunction with Tzav Piyus, an organization advocating domestic peace between secular and religious Israelis:
-The poll found that the level of tolerance between the various political sides is fairly low (6.4 on a scale of 0-10, where 0 is completely tolerant).
-"To which extent can you understand the position of the supporters/opponents of the disengagement plan?"
74 percent of disengagement supporters responded that they can understand the opponents; 47 percent of disengagement opponents responded that they can understand the supporters.

1. Mideast:

Summary:

Liberal columnist Meron Benvenisti wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "The Palestinians will never agree to the humiliating Israeli interpretations of their aspirations for national independence, and all the plans laden with goodwill and positive attitudes turn into bittersweet legends that come down to wondering what might have been, if only."

Block Quotes:

"A Fable For Adults"

Liberal columnist Meron Benvenisti wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (May 5): "To our surprise, the [Rand Corporation] has delivered a fable for adults.... The very assumption that the immediate establishment of the Palestinian state is a realistic assumption because President Bush and the road map call for it -- 'and a critical mass of Israelis and Palestinians support it, according to the polls' -- requires an exacting examination. Most Palestinians indeed do support the establishment of a state, as long as it enjoys all the trappings of sovereignty and is free of settlers. But the majority of Israelis who ostensibly support a Palestinian state are vehemently

opposed to the assumptions at the heart of the Rand vision, and support an entity that will have partial control over about half the West Bank, with no control over the border crossings, immigration policies, water resources, coastal waters, and airspace. Considering the gap in power between Israelis and Palestinians -- and in the absence of any foreign pressure -- it is clear that the Israeli version will be the determining one, and with it the [corporation's] vision of the Arc fades into the distant horizon. The Palestinians will never agree to the humiliating Israeli interpretations of their aspirations for national independence, and all the plans laden with goodwill and positive attitudes turn into bittersweet legends that come down to wondering what might have been, if only."

12. NPT Review Conference May 2-27 New York:

Summary:

Defense commentator Reuven Pedhazur opined in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "In light of [defiant] steps by the United States, it is clear that the chances of success for the month-long conference are not great.... However, the aggressive attitude of the U.S. administration ... is actually very convenient for Israel."

Block Quotes:

"A Treaty That Has Outlived Its Usefulness"

Defense commentator Reuven Pedhazur opined in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (May 5): "The nuclear policy of the Bush administration actually reduces the possibility of promoting the attempt to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. The U.S. President refused to join the treaty to ban nuclear tests, abandoned the treaty for preventing the development of anti-missile defense systems, and called for the development of new and advanced types of nuclear weapons once again. In light of these steps by the United States, it is clear that the chances of success for the month-long conference are not great.... However, the aggressive attitude of the U.S. administration, which while placing an emphasis on its own nuclear weapons, is simultaneously trying to put a stop to the nuclear programs of Iran and North Korea, is actually very convenient for Israel.... Next month, the fate of the NPT will be decided. Quite a number of those participating in the conference are convinced that the treaty in its present form has outlived its usefulness and that the time has come to formulate new rules, which will enable the international community to carry out proper supervision, to impose punishments and even to prevent additional countries from arming themselves with nuclear weapons. Israel hopes these rules will be accepted before Iran crosses the nuclear threshold. [Israel] is not relying on the fact that it will be the NPT that prevents Iran from completing the development of its nuclear weapons."

13. May 5 UK Elections:

Summary:

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "Tony Blair, in supporting Washington on the invasion of Iraq, did prove that he has ... courage and foresight.... In the coming years, too, Britain's prime minister will certainly need to display the same qualities in dealing with the threat of a potentially nuclear Iran."

Block Quotes:

"As Britain Votes"

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (May 5): "Despite the dents in Blair's standing, he is still expected to triumph over Conservative candidate Michael Howard.... From the Israeli perspective, no crucial differences emerged during the campaign between the Middle East policy perspectives of the Labor and Tory leaders.... At any rate, perhaps more crucial right now from Jerusalem's perspective is not 10 Downing Street's view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but its position regarding Iran. Europe has

a crucial role in preventing Teheran from developing a nuclear arsenal, and the voice of the British prime minister will be key in balancing other national viewpoints on the continent less willing to join the U.S. in taking a firm stance against Iran. Tony Blair, in supporting Washington on the invasion of Iraq, did prove that he has the courage and foresight to break with other European leaders in recognizing the real dangers in this region. In the coming years, too, Britain's prime minister will certainly need to display the same qualities in dealing with the threat of a potentially nuclear Iran."

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